



THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF GOD, THE UNIVERSE AND MAN

Author(s): FAZLUR RAHMAN

Source: *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (MARCH 1967), pp. 1-19

Published by: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20832864>

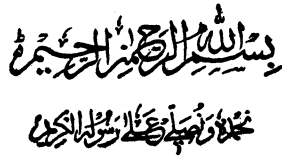
Accessed: 10-09-2016 00:20 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Islamic Studies*



THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF GOD, THE UNIVERSE AND MAN

FAZLUR RAHMAN

I. GOD

The Qur'ānic teaching is entirely oriented towards practice : it provides guidance for man. The interest of the Qur'ān in pure, speculative theology is, therefore, negative. Doubtless, the Qur'ān contains some theology, a certain amount of cosmology and psychology, etc., but these are all action-oriented and are meant to keep the attitude of man on correct lines, tuned up to the proper moral pitch and geared to a certain purpose. The Qur'ānic concept of God is, therefore, primarily—indeed, purely—*functional*. This is most certainly *not* to say that the Qur'ān is indifferent to the truth-value of its statements, but to affirm that the truth-value of statements—even about God—is subservient to and, in some vital sense, needs to be tested by their success in producing a state of affairs in the world. It should not, therefore, shock or surprise anyone that, although Allāh (God) is mentioned in the Qur'ān more than six thousand times (apart from other quasi-names of the Deity, like *Raḥmān*—'the Merciful'—and *Rabb*—'the Sustainer'), all these statements are actually statements about man—the centre of interest in the Qur'ān. This we shall try to bring out by an analysis of certain typical examples belonging to various categories of the Qur'ānic statements which are ostensibly about God.

It is because of the practical purposiveness of the Qur'ān that it avoids all theoretical discussion of the nature of God. It even resolutely refuses to touch on the problem of Divine power and how it affects human freedom : it simply asserts both that God is All-powerful and that a human being is endowed with choice and charged with responsibility.¹ This is because the interest of the Qur'ān is to keep human conduct within the tension created on the one hand by the fact that man can become a prey to hopelessness due to an excessive consciousness of his self-negation *vis-à-vis* God and, on the other, by the fact that man may become bold enough to rebel and may, in his self-righteousness, substitute his will for the

Moral Imperative. The purpose of the Qur'an is to prevent man from going to either of these nihilistic extremes and thus ensure his highest level of moral creativity.

One of the main functions of the idea of God is to vindicate the orderliness of the universe—that there is no lawlessness in nature, that the whole cosmos is an organic unity. This is the reason behind the insistent emphasis on the unity of God. "If there were in them (i.e. the earth and the heavens) other gods than Allāh, they would have been in disorder—so glorified be Allāh, the Lord of the Throne, beyond what they describe! (For) Allāh is not answerable about what He does while they (i.e. the alleged other gods) are answerable" (XXI: 22). *The glory of Allāh is that no matter what point you may imagine, He is there and yet to transcend every point is His very nature*; otherwise, the requirements of an order cannot be met. "If there were along with Him other gods, as they assert, these (other gods) would themselves be seeking an approach to the Master of the Throne" (XVII: 42). It is then part of the inherent logic of the concept of God that He be beyond all imaginable perfection, although He is present at every point within the scale of that perfection. It is this immanence-cum-transcendence which constitutes also the logic of the concept of a growing and expanding order.

It has been generally held that the God of Islam is uncompromisingly transcendent and that this is shown by the tremendous emphasis Islam puts on the unity of God, His majesty, awesomeness, etc.² This picture, however, does not emerge from the Qur'an, but from later theological development in Islam. A careful perusal of the Qur'an would reveal that it attributes all natural processes and events to God: from rains to the processes of the rise and fall of nations, from winning and losing in war and peace to the orderly revolution of cosmic bodies, all is referred to God.³ This clearly shows that God is not just the most transcendent but also the most immanent. The immanence of God, of course, does not have the slightest implication that acts performed by nature or man are *really* performed by God: God is not a rival of or a substitute for human or natural agencies in producing effects, nor does He interfere in any of the workings of these. Indeed, in all the Qur'anic statements where God appears as the real subject, one can, *so far as the factual content goes*, eliminate God and translate these statements into perfectly "naturalistic" ones without any loss

whatever. This is because God is not a fact among other facts. God is rather that which bestows meaningfulness on facts, gives them a new dimension and integrates them into an order. What we shall lose, then, by eliminating God is meaningfulness, order and purposiveness. So much so is this characteristic of God that, according to the Qur'ān, those who forget God, ultimately forget themselves (LIX: 19), i.e., their personality (individual and corporate) disintegrates, because they cannot meaningfully integrate themselves into the totality of being.

But for this demand of orderly purposiveness, of which we shall attempt to enumerate the salient consequents, the Qur'ānic concept of God makes no demands either on nature or man. Sometimes it is said that although God can or may upset nature, yet He does not do so for He has granted it autonomy. This description portrays a somewhat naïve picture of both God and the universe: the Qur'ān tells us that the universe is the index (*āyah*) to God, that its laws are part of His behaviour (*Sunnah*).⁴ The universe is, therefore, related to God as character is related to man or, in a sense, as a whole is related to its parts. The two are neither identical with each other nor yet separate from each other. Just as man can hardly upset or disown or dispense with his character, so is the case with God and this universe. But just as man's self goes beyond his character (which certainly never exhausts that self at and up to any given moment) and is, in some sense, creative of it, so does God transcend the universe and is creative of it.

Considerable difficulty is encountered by many students of the Qur'ān in understanding a whole set of verses where God is apparently portrayed as the cause of people's going astray from the right path as well as going on the right path. Indeed, the Qur'ān tells us that God "seals the hearts" of people, "deafens their ears" and "blinds their eyes" to truth.⁵ "Where then lies the human responsibility?" it is asked, construing these statements in the light of the philosophic problem of free-will and predestination. We shall see presently that the Qur'ān does not show the slightest interest in this philosophic problem and, in fact, asserts both sides of the tension in order to keep human behaviour on the right path, which is its central concern and not the nature of God. As far as the verses under consideration are concerned, it must be pointed out that the Qur'ān never states that God *absolutely* leads people astray. A study of all the relevant passages shows that God leads evil-doers,

those who reject the truth, astray.⁶ What the Qur'ān is, in fact, saying is that whenever a man does an evil act, his chances of repeating that kind of act increase and the chances of doing good decrease proportionately until a time comes when, by constantly practising evil, he apparently reaches a point of no return. That is where his "heart is sealed", his "ears deafened" to truth, etc. This is also the case *mutatis mutandis* with the performance of good acts. This is a psychological law whose operations, like the operations of all laws, are attributed to God by the Qur'ān. Yet, even at that stage, one may not say that a real or absolute point of no return has been reached. People confirmed in evil ways can always try to redeem themselves and utter hopelessness is never actually reached. Indeed, cases of apparently sudden and surprising change—'return' or 'conversion', where the moral personality is turned upside down, are well established. To be sure, these phenomena also occur according to laws—and are perfectly "natural"—but, again, they are attributed to the mercy of God.⁷ At no point can the phenomena be closed to scientific investigation; and yet at no point does their attribution to God and God's relevance to them cease.

The following two cases would illustrate the *contentual* (*factual*) equivalence of "naturalistic" statements and those wherein God appears as the subject. In the Qur'ān we frequently come across statements about the fortunes of men to the effect that it is God Who grants abundance of worldly fortunes and it is He Who puts men in straitened circumstances.⁸ This is, no doubt, also the naïve belief generally prevalent about the God of the Qur'ān, viz. whomsoever He wills He makes opulent and vice versa. Read, however, this passage: "When his Lord tests man, honours him and bestows bountifully upon him, he exclaims, 'My Lord has honoured me.' But when He tests him and straitens his livelihood, he exclaims, 'My Lord has dishonoured me'. Nay, (the fact is that) you do not honour (your) orphans, nor do you induce one another on feeding the poor ones (in the society); you devour inheritances wholesale and you are excessively attached to worldly goods" (LXXXIX : 15-20). The second is connected with the Prophet's claims to Prophethood. According to the Qur'ān, his opponents asked him why God came to select him as Prophet out of all people in the two cities of Mecca and Ṭā'if.⁹ The Qur'ān sometimes replies by saying, "God chooses whomsoever He wills as His Messenger" (e.g. III : 175). But the following verse gives the

reason, "God knows best where to place His Prophethood" (VI: 124). In the first case, the act, attributed to God, has been explained as a natural social process; in the second case the apparent act of God's choice has been given a naturalistic grounding.

But despite this *factual* equivalence, the Qur'ān uses the religious idiom rather than the "naturalistic" idiom. This is because upon the factual structure of the universe there supervenes a value structure which is the peculiarity of religio-moral life. The essence of religious life consists in value-affections and value-correspondence between the subject (man) and the objective reality. Where there is being rather than nothingness, God already exists for already the primordial value of being is realised. God is that Which has, as His primary attribute, the propulsion to being out of an abysmal emptiness of non-being. Already, the victory of being over non-being suggests that it cannot be a mere play of a blind force, for being is goodness and it already implies purpose. Now, being with order (indeed, it is difficult to conceive being without any order) completes the objective and existential conditions for a religio-moral response.

We have now established the existence of a creative, purposive Will. Is this Will personal or not? Is it immanent or transcendent? Is it awe-instilling or love-inspiring? Should one have an attitude of fear or comradeship towards it? Is it omnipotent or is the human will also efficacious beside the ultimate Will? On all these time-honoured metaphysical issues, the Qur'ānic attitude is not to accept these distinctions as absolute but to accept both sides of each disjunction because both are equally demanded by the human situation. For the God of the Qur'ān is a functional, pragmatic concept. It will be shown in Section III of this article that the Qur'ānic God is a person but not an individual, for personality and individuality are two different—perhaps even quite opposite—things. What the human situation is, will be explained more fully in the above-mentioned section where we shall outline the basic moral tensions of the human nature. The overall gain for a man or society generally imbued with such a faith is that they march ahead hopefully to conquer nature and to build a just, equitable, free and creative social order in harmony and unison with laws of God and avoid the numbing frustration of a materialist or an agnostic whose hopelessness is the handiwork of the negative

forces called the Devil.

II. THE UNIVERSE

The fundamental teaching of the Qur'ān about the universe is (a) that it is a cosmos, an order ; (b) that it is a developing, dynamic order ; (c) that it is not a vain play but has to be taken seriously ; man ought to study its laws, which constitute part of the behaviour of God, and make it the theatre of his purposeful activity. According to the Qur'ān when God creates something, i.e. brings it into being and gives it external form, at the same time He invests it with laws of its being and inlays it with potentialities and dynamics of its development. The first (i.e. bringing something into being and giving it a form) is called *khalaq*, while the second (i.e. investing something with a "nature" or dynamics of behaviour) is termed by the Qur'ān either '*amr*' (which means "Command") or *taqdīr*. The terms '*amr*' and *taqdīr* call for some elaboration of their meaning. The expression '*taqdīr*' literally means "measuring out" something and *qadar* is a quantity or volume measured out. Thus, when a certain car, for example, is manufactured to run for a maximum estimated at 1,50,000 miles, then the power to run so much, which is inlaid in it, is called its *taqdīr*. This *taqdīr* brings it about that this car, which is an automobile vehicle of a certain type, will not, e.g., be able to fly like an aeroplane, that it will be able to run faster than a man, etc. The analysis also reveals that *taqdīr* is to be understood in terms of powers, potentialities, dispositions-cum-processes rather than in terms of events and happenings as the popular understanding of this term would invite us to believe. The popular notion of *taqdīr* implying, as it does, a predetermination of events has, in fact, nothing to do with the teaching of the Qur'ān but, like so many other influential ideas in the history of Islam, has been an importation from without. Let us now consider our analysis in the light of the Qur'ān.

In a *Sūrah* of the early Meccan period, the Qur'ān says, "Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Exalted Who created (*khalaqa* i.e. gave form to things) and consummated (the forms) and Who (having created) inlaid the potentialities (of things : *qaddara*) and thus gave direction (*hadā*)" (LXXXVII : 1-3). This passage is the most eloquent evidence that, in the language of the Qur'ān, God, when He creates or externally forms a thing, at the same time invests it with its inner, natural constitution, the dynamic law of its behaviour, i.e. its

taqdīr which also constitutes its *hidāyah*, the direction or the goal towards which it tends. Similarly, "When He said to the heavens and the earth, 'Come hither willingly or unwillingly', they replied, 'We come in voluntary obedience (i.e. not despite ourselves)' . . . God then inspired every heavenly sphere with its peculiar '*amr*' (i.e. *taqdīr*) . . . and this *taqdīr* (investment with dynamic laws of behaviour) was by the Mighty, the Knowing God". (XLI : 11-12). The same phrase, "*taqdīr* by the Mighty, Knowing God" is used in XXXVI : 39, where the orderly revolutions of space bodies are described, which are said to "swim" each in its own orbit. Again, in LXXVII : 20-23, the same expression is used after describing the evolutionary process of the sperm in the female nursery. Finally, we may note the following passage, "He created everything and invested it with *taqdīr* (i.e. determined its character by giving it a constitution)" (XXV : 12).

Two closely connected points emerge from this. First, *events* in the world are never predetermined or preordained by God (or, indeed, by physical forces). That event A shall occur at time *a* remains an open possibility, among other possible alternatives, until it is actually caused. This is because, secondly, what is determined are not *events*, as we said above, but *potencies*, *powers* and *forces*. Thus, it is determined that oxygen has a potency whereby, if it is mixed with hydrogen in a certain proportion and under certain conditions, the result will be water. What is determined here are the *potencies* (*taqdīrs*) of hydrogen and oxygen to turn into water if they are mixed under certain conditions. The actual *event* of their being so mixed at a definite space-time is never predetermined and depends on a host of factors. The fact, however, that things have definite, measurable natures, is also sometimes extended by the Qur'ān into the further meaning of *qadr* as power. This is because everything which is measurable, is within grip, as it were, and does not have the quality of being absolutely free, or, rather, lawless. Thus, the term *qadr* or *qudrah* comes to mean 'power'.

So is the case with the Qur'ānic term '*amr*' which we have rendered by the word "command". We have already noticed that in XLI : 12 God "inspires every heavenly sphere with its peculiar '*amr*' (i.e. law of behaviour)". In VII : 53, after stating how the sun and the moon revolve, the Qur'ān says, "To God belong both creation (*khalq*) and commanding ('*amr*', i.e. investing objects with dispositions, patterns of behaviour, potencies)". In X : 3 and 31

(cf. also XIII : 2 and XXXII : 5), after portraying various creations of God—the heavens, the earth, the process whereby life comes out of death and vice versa—the Qur'ān concludes in identical terms, "God systematically runs (*yudabbiru*) the Command". It is thus obvious that the concepts of *taqdīr* and 'amr are, in this usage, identical with each other. However, we shall see below, in Section III, while discussing the position of man, that, at the human level, the two become utterly disparate, that while *taqdīr* there has hardly any function (except at the physical or, perhaps, psycho-physical level), the 'amr assumes a paramount importance because it becomes charged with a moral import.

The universe, then, manifests a primordial dynamic power which is purposeful and good. The fact that the universe exists at all, exhibits both power and goodness for, as we have shown before, existence is better than non-existence. To say that this does not prove God but may prove nothing "beyond matter" is mere disputatiousness. For we are not quarrelling about names ; all we are concerned with is to prove the existence of a Power or Will with the attributes we have ascribed to it. Again, to contend that this Will or Power is not necessarily "good" because "evil" (or pain) obviously exists in the world, is equally beside the point, for the evil that does exist, exists within the framework of this goodness. Without this goodness, there would be no "evil" (in this sense) or "pain". Since this Will is purposeful, it follows that it is dynamic and ceaselessly creative. That is why the Qur'ān says, for example, "We created heavens with Our Power—and We are, indeed, expanding (them : *innā la-mūsi'ūn*") (LI : 47). And "He adds to His creation whatever He wills" (XXXV : I). He is not a "slumbering" or "sleeping" God (II : 255).

Indeed, the religious attitude of man, as exhibited in history, has, generally speaking, been a story of two extremes of action and reaction against both of which the Qur'ān has decisively set itself. On the one side has been the aggressive "optimism" of many religions according to which, God, with a special "fatherly" instinct, created the nursery of this earth, the centre of the universe, to "rear His children". Periodically, investigations of the physical universe revealed facts and urged considerations which shocked this self-made cosy picture and produced a reaction of crass materialism. The Qur'ān tells us that the goodness manifested in the universe is not of a subjective nature but is the goodness of

being as against non-being, of positiveness as against negation, of abundance as against that of privation. In order really to know and appreciate it, one must study nature and her laws objectively (both the physical nature "outside" man and the laws of the inner constitution of the mind) and also learn lessons from laws operating in human history. For these laws are "signs (*āyāt*)" of God, and only by studying them objectively can one avoid both the extremes of a subjective and falsely projected sense of security and the chilly scepticism and cynical hopelessness generated by materialism. "In the (creation of the) heavens and the earth there are signs for men of faith. And in your own creation and in the multiplication of living creatures there are signs for those who would believe. And in the succession of day and night and the fact that God sends rains which quicken the earth after it is dead and in the interplay of winds are signs for people who would understand" (XLV: 3-5). Such verses abound in the Qur'ān.¹⁰ We shall see presently that the Qur'ān describes the absolute obedience and submission to natural laws on the part of all natural objects as their "service" to God.

But the universe has been created according to laws and runs on regular patterns and man is asked to discover these laws and locate these patterns so that he may conquer nature and harness it—not as a vain pursuit but to create goodness therein and to make it subservient to his purposeful activity. The entire creation is laid at the service of man who may successfully exploit it for a good end. Thus, although the naïve religious picture that God has created cosy home for man on earth—so that man may take the universe for granted—is not true, it is true that *with his efforts*, properly and constructively directed, man can harness nature for His ever-unfolding good purposes. And this is, indeed, his duty whose discharge constitutes "service (*ibādah*)" on his part, as we shall discover. This is that "Trust" which, according to the Qur'ān, God offered to the heavens and the earth and which they "refused" to accept, but which was voluntarily accepted by man. This "Trust" is to discover the laws of, and thus get mastery over, nature—or, in the Qur'ānic terminology, "to know the names of all things"—and then use this mastery, under the human moral initiative, to create a good world order.

It is only in this way—to use the knowledge of the physical and psychic nature with care under the moral imperative—that the

"Kingdom of God" can be established, i.e. when a carefully formulated, balanced moral order supervenes on the physical order or "natural" order. This is why the Qur'ān insists that whatever has been created in this universe is for the use of man. "God has subjugated (*sakḥḥara*) to you whatever there is in the heavens and in the earth—in their entirety" (XLV : 13), just as "He has put under your control the oceans, that ships may ply therein with His command" (XLV : 12). Again, "He has harnessed for you the sun and the moon with their confirmed (patterns of) behaviour (*dā'ibayn*) and He has harnessed for you (succession of the) night and the day (i.e. the process of time)" (XVI : 13). Similar assertions are repeated in several other places.¹¹ These statements make it abundantly clear that whereas it would be perilously wrong to assume that the universe is, as it were a ready-made, prefabricated home for man which he has simply inherited to enjoy without further ado, the universe, nevertheless, can, and indeed, must be exploited through a progressive knowledge of its workings and through a careful wielding of this knowledge and that, in this vital sense, the entire universe exists for man and in order to assist his ends. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān declares, "We have, indeed, honoured man and enabled him to be mobile on land and sea....." (XVII : 70). This discussion brings us to a closer examination of what man is required to do, an appreciation of his powers and weaknesses and how to overcome his weaknesses in the light of the Qur'ānic teaching.

III. MAN

We have pointed out above that the goal of man is to study the universe, the laws of his own inner psychic constitution and the process of history and then to press this knowledge in the service of the good and that this purposeful activity—the *'ibādah* or 'service of God'—is the purpose of his creation and, indeed, the purpose of all creation. That is why man was honoured as the best of creation and angels were asked to lie prostrate before him. In II : 30-33, when angels remonstrate to God urging Him not to create man, "who will work mischief and shed blood on earth", God, implicitly accepting this criticism, rejects their demand, saying, "I know what you know not". Angels were then asked to "name" things and, when they pleaded their inability to do so, Adam succeeded in giving "names" to things ; whereupon God said to the angels, "Did I not tell you that I knew better (why I created man)?" This shows that one characteristic feature

of man, which distinguishes him from the rest of the creation is his capacity to "give names" to things. Now, "naming" things implies the capacity to discover the properties of things, their interrelations and laws of behaviour. When I call something a stone, a tree or an electron, I know something about its behaviour, am able to find out more about it and to predict it. That is to say, man is distinguished from the rest of the creation through his creative, scientific knowledge of things (physical science), of man's inner constitution (psychological science) and man's outer behaviour as a continued process in time (historical science).

But this is not all. The human mind is not just like a mirror or a passive instrument in which truths about the universe are simply reflected or recorded: he is not just a duplicate miniature universe even if the time-honoured title "microcosm" conferred on him by the Graeco-Roman civilization asserts this. We have said before that partly man's essential task is to reconstruct a scientific picture of the objective reality and partly to proceed to interfere in it and create a moral order on the basis of this scientific knowledge. This second activity cannot exist without, but must supervene on, the first, i.e. the scientific structure. But to engage in the scientific pursuit without harnessing it for the creation of a good order—to know the "names" without utilizing them, would be, in the words of the Qur'ān, '*abath*' or a vain and even dangerous, indeed, Satanic pursuit. This is precisely what Iqbal meant when he said that '*aql* (scientific reason) without '*ishq* (positive moral creativity) is a misguided devilish exercise (and he accused the West of patently indulging in it), while '*ishq* without '*aql* was not just sterile but even pure self-deception (and he particularly accused the Muslims of having been guilty of it over the past few centuries).¹² Man is charged with this double responsibility and to this the Qur'ān refers when it says, "We offered this Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains but they declined to bear it and shrank back in fright, but Man bore it—he is, indeed, aggressively foolhardy" (XXX: 72).

The progressive realization of this dynamic human goal requires an attitude on the part of man, which, characterized by a delicate balance, can only be called a "middle term" between extremes. If one studies the Qur'ān carefully, the central brunt of its ethical teaching, expressed in different forms, is at bottom concerned with this basic issue, and, as we shall see more pointedly even than the

hints given to this effect before, this is where the *functional* aspect of God is revealed at its best. The basic fact about human nature is that this vital task cannot be prosecuted successfully unless a balance is maintained between certain antithetical poles which constitute the "tensions" of man's mental-moral life. To achieve and keep this balance is, indeed, a feat, for the Devil (who is the coeval of man) is ever ready and fully equipped to beguile him to the one extreme or the other. The most basic and recurrent criticism the Qur'ān makes of human character is that man is either reckless, haughty, boastful, 'independent', and 'self-sufficient' (in the sense that he considers himself to be the measure of all things) or his mood soon passes into that of abject desperation and hopelessness and a state of utter helplessness where he completely falls flat. There was hardly a creature who is both inflated and deflated so quickly. "Indeed, if We cause man to taste of Our mercy and then We withdraw it from him, he loses all hope and assumes an attitude of rejection (of truth : *kufṛ*) ; but if We give him good things after hard days which he has endured, he asserts that all evil has deserted him and he becomes swollen with pride—except such ones as exercise self-control (*ṣabarū*) and do good works . . ." (XI : 9-11). "When We treat man with Our bounty, he becomes indifferent and intractable but when evil comes to him, he is desperate" (XVII : 83). "Man will not tire of asking for good things, but when evil touches him, he becomes a desperate cynic (*ya'ūsun qanūṭ*) ; but when We cause him to taste of Our mercy after hardship that has afflicted him, he asserts : 'This is my right' . . . (XLI : 49-51). Finally, how realistic is this estimate of average human character : "Man has been created timid : when evil befalls him he panics ; but when good comes his way, he prevents it (from reaching others), except those who constantly pray and in whose wealth there is a definite share (of *zakāh*-tax) for the needy and the poor" (LXX : 19-25).

The basic purpose of the Qur'ān is to create and maintain in man an attitude between these two extremes. We shall see later in a subsequent paper that the idea of the "balance" or "the means" in human behaviour is central in the Qur'ānic teaching. But in the area of the attitude of mind which is our concern at the present moment, this concept is most crucial, indeed. The reason is that humanity undoes itself and betrays its very existence and, indeed, ceases to function when a point on either of the two extremes is

reached. It is this point which constitutes *kufṛ* or rejection of the Source of Life whether he becomes devoid of hope or devoid of necessary humility, i.e. the necessity to submit to an order and a standard which is outside him. The Qur'ān is concerned to bring about and maintain a state between these two; it can be only described as a state of self-control and confidence. It is only by intensifying this state of mind that the creative energy and quality of man can be maximized—which is the purpose of human life. This is the state of Faith (*īmān*), the opposite is *kufṛ*. Actually, it is not difficult to see why the points of excess on both sides of this "middle" state come to the same thing. The Qur'ān illustrates this by the example of Satan who, through excessive pride, refused to humble himself before the superior knowledge of Adam—thus disobeying God: but the result of this over-asserting ego was his total isolation from the positive forces of nature—thus condemning him to utter and inevitable hopelessness.

We have now reached a point where the idea of God comes to assume a full-blown meaning for man. Given this "middle" state of confidence, self-control and Faith, where man reasonably secures "protection" (*taqwā*) for himself against at least fatal errors, God grants him a correct perception of things—intellectually and morally—a perception which the Qur'ān often calls "guidance (*hudā*)" and "light (*nūr*)".¹³ It is to be noted that man's proper state, described above, is a condition for this guidance and light, yet this guidance, light or correct perception, is a "gift" of God because the proper state of mind, although necessary for this divine response, is, nevertheless, never a *total cause* of that response. God's response cannot be commandeered at will. If a man wants to find out some result, make a discovery, etc., he must first collect the relevant data, study them, cogitate about them, etc. But this process, which constitutes the proper state of mind we have described above, although necessary for the final result or discovery—and, in fact, represents the proper attitude of prayer—cannot cent per cent guarantee the result. There is, therefore, no strict causal connection between the state of mind and the response, which may be statable in universal terms. But although there is no causal connection, there is some kind of vital connection, so that *generally* this state of mind and the effect which is its characteristic feature, are rewarded by success.

It is for this reason that God is described as the "Light of the

heavens and the earth", a Light which is definite and not vague in its functions and modes of operation, in the celebrated Qur'anic passage (XXIV : 35) and the opposite condition is described as "layers upon layers of darkness wherein one cannot see one's own hand if one were to stretch it out" (XXIV : 40). Man actively gropes, God gives perception ; man searches, God grants discovery; man prays, i.e. makes the effort, God brings the result. Active groping, searching, praying and making the effort are necessary initiatives on the part of man in order to evoke the corresponding response from God. Just as with cognitive situations so is the case with moral situations. It belongs to man to struggle, endeavour and fight; to achieve goodness, to attain results is *conditional upon man's proper endeavour* but is likewise a gift of God. That is why the Qur'ān incessantly says that if man makes the proper effort and displays the proper state and attitude, God will be his comrade, his co-operative, his helper and friend.¹⁴

It may be argued at this point that the introduction of God is quite unnecessary and that this whole phenomenon (of effort and result) can be formulated in statistical terms. For, if the appeal to God is simply on the score that our cognitive and moral efforts do not *always* bring results but only in a majority of cases, why should we need a God to make this phenomenon intelligible? We may statistically formulate propositions showing the distributions of the nature of effort and the amount of success attendant upon it. The only trouble with such a position is that it ignores the personal dimension of the effort and pretends to be able to treat it as a non-personal entity. A basic point about an effort or a struggle is the *personal* concern, the tension, the anxiety and the forward-lookingness which the agent experiences and without which no effort can be called an effort and no struggle a struggle and, in fact, it would be robbed of its forward-looking quality or hope. The agent cannot look upon the issue of his effort with the detachment of a statistical generalization : he has to succeed. God, therefore, becomes eminently relevant to him and gives him strength.

This is the meaning of prayer. Prayer is an active, receptive attitude of mind, wherein the agent, while engaged in a cognitive or moral endeavour, seeks help from the Source of Life. Through this, new energies flow into the self of the one who prays. But it will be noticed that there must be a struggle or endeavour afoot on the part of the one who prays and it will be in the context of this

struggle—that his prayers will have any meaning at all. This is why the Qur'ān says, "Seek help (in your struggle, O Muslims!) from patience and prayers" (II : 45 and 153). For, patience and prayer fortify the self so that it does not succumb to the weakening and corrosive influences of fears and temptations. It is through this renewal of strength and fresh infusion of energies that God becomes the friend and helper of the man of Faith: "This is because God is the comrade (*mawlā*) of those who have Faith but the *kāfirs* (who negate the Source of Life and its implications) have no comrade" (XLVII: 11). For, "Satan always (ultimately) leaves his men in the lurch" (XXV : 29). This is, indeed, the crucial distinction between God and Satan, between men of Faith fighting for good and their opponents, viz. that whereas men of Faith persevere, and as their struggle proceeds, become more and more energetic and full of conviction of the rightness of their cause, the opposite is the case with people who reject truth (*kāfirs*).

It is in this setting—the human, moral situation—that God assumes the full-blooded meaning for life and experience. As we saw in Section II above, God's 'amr is inlaid in the universe, an 'amr which constitutes the *taqdīr*—i.e. a sum total of potencies and dispositions and trends and the patterns of their actualization—of everything. It is this 'amr-*taqdīr* dynamism which is described in the Qur'ān by the term "*malā'ikah*" or angels. Angels are dynamic agents (i.e. 'amr of God) whereby things function. This is the working of the physical world by a natural necessity. This is why the Qur'ān states in various contexts and places that everything in nature is a "*muslim*", i.e. submits to the Will or Command of God and that everything "prays" but that the "prayer" of natural objects is essentially different from that of man, because the former is characterized by a necessity of obedient behaviour (III : 83 ; XXIV : 41 ; etc.) while man has been given the right of choice.¹⁵ This process, viz. of the inlaying of Command ('amr or angels) and its functioning, shows, on closer scrutiny, a double movement. There is a process of the ongoing functioning of nature which we have described, but at the same time there is a process of recording this process or "storing it up in the memory of the Universe". It is this latter process which, at the critical stages of the evolution of the universe, enables a total "Reckoning" or "Accounting" to take place, which extends itself to all forms of life in a sense, but is morally applicable only to man. The Qur'ān

describes this double process in several passages. "God ordains the 'amr from the heavens down to the earth and then it ascends back to Him" (XXXII : 5). Again, "The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day . . ." (LXX : 4).¹⁶

Now, 'amr at the human level takes on an entirely different form. Whereas in nature it represents that which necessarily "is", thanks to the physical laws, in the realm of the human activity proper it assumes the form of an obligatory "ought". The Command enunciated for man is termed by the Qur'ān the "Spirit of the Command" (*rūḥ min al-'amr*) or a spiritualized angelic agency. This "Spirit of the Command" manifests itself in the messages of especially sensitive men who rise for the guidance of mankind at the critical junctures of human history, the last being Muḥammad. After Muḥammad, humanity is able to move forward by collective guidance and individual guidance of the nature of a Prophetic message is no longer necessary.

The function of man is to *interfere* in the "is" of nature under the imperiousness of the "ought" of the moral law—the 'amr of God for man—and to use both his tremendous possibilities of control over nature and the results of his moral and intellectual perception for this grand purpose. This colossal responsibility, under whose weight the entire universe chafed and whence it fled, has fallen on man's shoulders. But if he uses his faculties aright and with due seriousness and earnestness, he is not alone in this chilly wilderness of "soundless, scentless, and colourless merely the hurrying of matter, meaninglessly, endlessly",¹⁷ to use Whitehead's phrase. God is his comrade and helper; He shall grant his prayers and bestow energies on him so that every man of real Faith will never be alone but will be able to supplement his own energy and vision by the influx of invisible powers from God against the contending forces. He will stand like an unshakable rock: "God is with you"; "God is your friend"; "Indeed, the party of God shall be the winner" (XLVII : 35, etc.; III : 150; VIII : 40, etc.; LVIII : 19–22). "God is the comrade of men of Faith while those who reject the Source of Life (*al-kāfirīn*) have no (real) comrade (XLVII : 11).

We may sum up the discussion in this paper as follows: The universe is an order, a cosmos, and works by the laws and potencies that are inlaid in it as the "command ('amr, *taqdīr*, angelic agencies) of God". It is the unchangeable behaviour or

character of God. Although one may use an entirely "naturalistic" language to denote the processes of nature, nevertheless, the positing of God, even at a purely natural level seems necessary on two scores ; the fact that there is being rather than utter emptiness of non-being (which indicates an ultimate, dynamic ego) and the fact that the universe is an order. This latter consideration is not negated by an apparent nonconformity of microscopic phenomena to laws, particularly to causal laws. God, therefore, is a creative, purposive Will, dynamic and "generous" by nature.

Man is the noblest of all creation. The entire universe is made for him and subservient to his purposes. Among all creation, he alone is endowed with moral and rational powers and a free-will and is charged with the grave and all-important responsibility of subduing nature and pressing it in the service of the good ends. This involves a moral struggle against powerful negative forces symbolized by the Devil. In this struggle, man must proceed with an attitude which is characterized by calculated risk and confidence and must stick to the moral "middle terms" avoiding all extremes of hopelessness and over-confidence, pure immanence and absolute transcendence. It is within the framework of these tensions that the real scope of man's dynamic and creative activity lies ; otherwise, on either side of these extremes he reaches the perilous point of *kufur* or rejection of, and alienation from, the Source of Life.

At the level of the human endeavour, God becomes most meaningful and relevant. Even if all propositions about the *factual* content of nature may and, indeed, do eliminate God, (although this cannot be done about the nature as a totality or a whole), at the human level God's concept plays a most decisive and crucial role of comrade of the Faithful, of one who grants prayers, etc. This shows that God is not a fact among other facts and coordinate with them but is rather the mode in which these facts behave *as a totality*. He is the meaning of the universe ; He is the way the totality of facts is looked upon which invests that totality with meaning or with a "beginning and end", in the words of the Qur'ān, "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (XXIV : 35). Without Him, even the individual facts of the universe will not remain facts. In other words, God's concept is functional, i.e. God is needed not for what He is or may be but for what He does. It is exactly in this spirit that Aristotle compares God to a general of the army. For the general (in Aristotle's concept) is not a soldier among other

soldiers—just as God is not an extra-fact among facts—but represents “order”, i.e. the fundamental function of holding the army together. Indeed, without him the order, says Aristotle, would disintegrate.¹⁸ So does God bestow meaningfulness on life and the world-process.

NOTES

1. (a) Man's responsibility, his being warned and endowed with choice:—VI : 131-33; XVII : 15; XXVII : 92-93; XXXIX : 41; LXXVI : 3; XC : 10; etc. (b) Almighty Allāh guides him whom He chooses and leads astray whom He wills:—II : 26, 213, 272; XIV : 4; XVI : 93; XXIV : 46; XXVIII : 56; XXXV : 8; LXXIV : 31; etc.
2. E.g., D. B. Macdonald, art. ALLĀH, *E.I.*¹, and L. Gardet, *idem*, *E.I.*², especially his *Conclusion* on p. 409.
3. (a) Rains, earth and its bounties, etc.:—II : 22; VI : 100; VII : 57; XIII : 17; XIV : 32; XV : 16-22; XVI : 10; XXII : 5; XXVII : 60-64; XXX : 48-50; XLI : 39; LVI : 68-72; LXXIX : 27-33; LXXX : 24-32; etc. (b) Rise and fall of nations:—II : 247; III : 25; VI : 6; XVII : 17; XIX : 74, 98; XX : 128; XXVIII : 5-6; XXXII : 26; XXXVIII : 3; I : 36; etc. (c) Winning and losing in war:—III : 122-26; IX : 25-26; XXX : 1-5; etc. (d) Orderly revolution of cosmic bodies:—XVI : 12; XXI : 33; XXXVI : 39-40; XXXIX : 5.
4. XVII : 77; XXX : 30; XXXIII : 62; XXXV : 43-44; XLVIII : 23; etc.
5. II : 7; VI : 46; VII : 25; XLV : 23; etc.
6. II : 26-27, 258, 264; III : 85; IV : 142-43; VI : 126; IX : 37, 80, 127; XVI : 107; XXXVIII : 50; XLV : 23-26; LXI : 5, 7; LXII : 5; LXIII : 1-6; etc.
7. IV : 16; V : 39, 74; IX : 118; XVI : 119; etc.
8. XIII : 26; XVII : 30; XXIX : 62; XXVIII : 82; XXX : 37; XXXIV : 36, 39; XXXIX : 52; XLII : 12; LXXXIX : 15-20; XCIII : 8; etc.
9. XLIII : 31. Mecca and Ṭā'if were the main emporiums of the eastern trade on the eve of Islam.
10. II : 164; III : 189; X : 5-6; XXX : 20-25; XXXI : 31; XXXVI : 33-46; XLII : 32-35; etc.
11. E.g., XIV : 32-33; XVI : 12, 16; XXII : 65; XXI : 20; XLV : 12-13; etc.
12. Perhaps the following verses from *Jāvid Nāmāh* (Lahore, 1959, 71) are some of the most representative of Iqbal's thought on the subject :

غربیان را زیرکی سالی حیات	شرقیان را عشق راز کائنات
زیرکی از عشق گردد حق شناس	کار عشق از زیرکی محکم اساس
خیز و نقش عالم دیگر بنه	عشق را با زیرکی آمیز ده

To the Westerners Intellect is the equipment of life ;

To the Easterners Love-Intuition is the hidden truth of the universe.

Intellect grows acquainted with the truth through Love-Intuition,

While Love-Intuition gets stabilized through Intellect.

Arise and draw the pattern of a world with a difference :

A world where Intellect is wedded with Love-Intuition.

13. XXXII: 13 ; XLVII: 17 ; LVII: 28, 57 ; LXVI: 8 ; etc.
14. II: 257 ; III: 149 ; IV: 28 ; VIII: 40 ; XXII: 78 ; XLI: 31 ; XLV: 19 ; XLVII: 11 ; etc.
15. See note 1 (a) above.
16. About the-“descending” of the angels and the Spirit, see XCVII: 4.
17. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, 1926, 77.
18. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII. x. 1, (Vol. II, p. 167), The Loeb Classical Library.